

YOUR Health

Los Angeles County Department of Health Services • Public Health

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Preparing for the Bugs of Summer



With the arrival of warm weather, it's inevitable that the insects of summer will be out conducting business as usual. There is also the possibility the plentiful rainfall the county experienced this winter may act as a catalyst to produce greater numbers or heightened activity in many of the insects and spiders found normally around the home. To prepare, here is some information to help identify insects and to reduce the risks they may have.

Spiders

Young spiders emerge in the spring. The only spider occurring throughout Los Angeles County considered to be a public health pest is the female black widow. Webs are constructed beneath patio furniture, around pool filters, beneath sheds, inside storage buildings, or in the corners of our garages. Although the female black widow's fangs are small, her neurotoxic venom produces extreme pain in most

cases, as well as a rise in body temperature, increased blood pressure, profuse perspiration, and nausea.

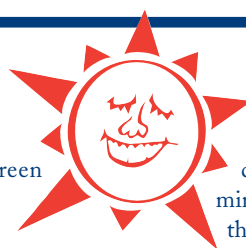
If you suspect you have been bitten by a black widow, wash the bite area with soap and water and consult with a physician immediately.

It is advisable to learn to recognize the characteristic web of the black widow and conduct routine inspections of properties with a flashlight on a weekly basis. These webs are most often located within 18 inches of the ground. The spiders venture out onto the web as evening advances and hang upside down as they wait for prey to stumble into their webs. The spider can be sprayed with a household pesticide or knocked to the ground with a broom and crushed.

Despite their often large size, hairy bodies or huge webs, the rest of the spiders we see are relatively harmless. If the fangs are long enough to penetrate human skin, the venom will produce a mild to moderate reaction that heals in two weeks or less. Since spider fangs are known to have high bacteria counts, infections from bites present a far greater risk to health than the venom. Any bite should

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FUN IN THE SUN



Summer months in Southern California may include hours in the sun and the pool for our children. To keep them safe and healthy, here are some helpful hints recommended by the American Academy of Pediatrics:

Sun Care:

Babies younger than 6 months old: Babies' skin is thinner than adults and need extra protection from the sun. Dress infants in lightweight long pants and long-sleeved shirts. Brimmed hats are also recommended. When adequate clothing and shade are not available, use a small amount of sunscreen to small areas, such as the infant's face and the back of the hands.

For young children: Use the 30/30 rule: Apply sunscreen with SPF (sun protection factor) of 30 at least 30 minutes before going

outside. Remember to use sunscreen even on cloudy days.

For older children:

The best defense against the sun is to cover up. Wear a hat with a three-inch brim or a bill facing forward, sunglasses that block 99-100% of ultraviolet rays, and cotton clothing with a tight weave. Stay in the shade whenever possible, and avoid sun exposure during the peak intensity hours (10 am to 4 pm). Use a sunscreen with an SPF of 15 or greater. Be sure to apply enough sunscreen and reapply about every two hours or after swimming or sweating.

Heat Stress and Children:

In high heat and humidity, children should reduce the intensity of their outdoor activities (such as sports, hiking, or bike riding) that last 15 minutes or more. Children should be well-hydrated before beginning a prolonged physical activity. During the activity, make sure your child

drinks water or a sports drink every 20 minutes, even if the child does not feel thirsty. Clothing should be light-colored & light-weight and limited to one layer of absorbent material. Replace sweaty garments with dry ones.

Pool Safety:

Whenever infants or toddlers are in or around water, an adult should be within arm's length, providing "touch supervision." Never leave children alone in or near a pool, even for a moment. Install a fence at least 4 feet high around all sides of the pool. Make sure pool gates self-close and self-latch at a height children can't reach. Keep rescue equipment (a life preserver or a long pole with a hook) and a portable telephone

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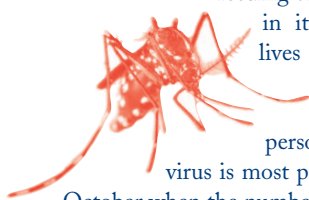
Facts about West Nile Virus

What is West Nile Virus?

West Nile Virus (WNV) is a virus that can be transmitted to other birds and humans by infected mosquitoes and cause serious illness or death. WNV has become a seasonal epidemic in the U.S., flaring up in the summer and continuing into the fall, when the numbers of mosquitoes are high. In 2004, Los Angeles County (excluding the cities of Long Beach and Pasadena) had 309 confirmed WNV cases, with 13 resulting in death.

How do people get West Nile Virus?

Generally, WNV is transmitted to people by infected mosquitoes. Various species of mosquitoes carry the virus but very few mosquitoes are actually infected. A mosquito is infected by feeding on a bird with the virus in its blood. The virus lives in the mosquito and is transmitted when the insect bites a person or animal. The virus is most prevalent from May to October when the number of mosquitoes tends to be the highest.



A few cases of WNV have been spread through blood transfusions, organ transplants, breastfeeding, and mother-to-baby during pregnancy. Organs and blood are now screened for WNV and are considered safe.

It is important to note that WNV is not spread through casual contact such as touching or kissing an infected person, bird, or other animal.

What are the symptoms of West Nile Virus infection in people?

Most people have no symptoms: 80% of people who are infected with WNV have no symptoms and will recover on their own.

Some people have mild symptoms: 20% of people infected with the virus have symptoms that may range from mild to severe that include: fever, headache, nausea, body aches, skin rash, and swollen lymph nodes. These symptoms typically go away in a few days, although some individuals will remain sick for longer.

Few people have serious symptoms: It is estimated that 1 in 150 people who are infected with WNV will have a severe illness, including meningitis or encephalitis (inflammation of the brain) and even death. The elderly and people with weak immune systems (those with HIV/AIDS and diabetes for example) are particularly susceptible to developing severe symptoms. There is no specific treatment for infection with WNV, although supportive care is important.

Please consult your healthcare provider if you think you have WNV.

Can animals get West Nile Virus?

An infected mosquito can bite any animal, but not all animals will become ill. The disease most often affects birds and horses.

Mosquitoes primarily get the virus from wild birds. Infection has been reported in more than 70 bird species. Although many birds that are infected with WNV will not appear ill, the virus can cause serious illness and death in some birds. The most severe illnesses are seen among crows, jays, ravens, and magpies.

Horses are also susceptible to WNV. The virus can cause inflammation of the brain (encephalitis) but the CDC reports that horses can recover from WNV if infected. The disease does not seem to be specific to a particular breed or age of horse. The best way to protect horses from WNV is by vaccination.

Can I prevent WNV?

The best way to protect yourself and your family is by preventing mosquito bites.

- Avoid outdoor activity at dawn and dusk during the mosquito season (May to October). This is particularly important for the elderly and chronically ill. If you must go outdoors, remember to wear long pants and long sleeve shirts.
- Apply insect repellent with DEET on exposed skin when outdoors. Repellents with 10-30% DEET are available for adults and children over 2 months of age.
- Make sure that doors and windows have tight-fitting screens to prevent mosquitoes from coming into the home. Repair or replace screens that have tears or holes in them.
- Drain all standing water on your property. Change water in wading pools, pet dishes, and bird baths two times a week.
- Stock permanent ponds with fish that eat mosquito larvae.
- Make sure roof gutters drain properly. Clean clogged gutters in the spring and fall.
- Cover trash cans and recyclables to keep out water that mosquitoes may breed in.

What do I do if I see a deadbird?

Counting dead birds helps Public Health track the disease around the county. If you find a dead bird, please call

- Los Angeles County Veterinary Public Health at 1-877-747-2243
- or
- California Department of Health Services at 1-877-WNV-BIRD

Do you have a mosquito problem?

Residents may contact their local mosquito/vector control district:

Greater Los Angeles
(562)-944-9656
or www.glacvdc.org

Los Angeles County West
310-915-7370
or www.lawestvector.org

Compton Creek
(310) 639-7375

Antelope Valley
(661)-942-2917
or www.avmosquito.org

San Gabriel Valley
(626)-814-9466
or www.sgvmosquito.org

City of Long Beach
(562)-570-4132

City of Pasadena
(626)-744-6004

For more information, contact the county health department at
1-800-975-4448 or www.lapublichealth.org

Summer Food Safety Tips

When summer arrives, picnic and barbeque season begins. But any picnic, barbeque or beach excursion can go sour quickly if someone gets food poisoning.

Food poisoning, can occur after eating food contaminated by viruses, bacteria, and parasites. Most problems result from food getting cold when it needs to stay warm, or from undercooking foods such as chicken and other types of meat. Follow these tips to keep you and your family safe.

Buying Food

Raw meat, dairy, eggs, and fish:

- Always check the expiration date on the label and never buy fish or meat that have strange color or have unusual odors. Checking both the expiration date and appearance of the fish and meat are important because basing the meat on just color is not enough.
- Buy eggs that are clean and have no cracks. They should be grade A or AA.
- Do not buy pre-stuffed turkeys or chickens.
- Put these items in your cart last during your time at the market.
- Put them in a cooler in your car if your drive home is longer than one hour.

Fruits:

- Do not buy fruit with broken skin (bacteria can get into the fruit through the opening of the skin).
- Always buy pasteurized ciders and juices.

Foods that require refrigeration:

- Cream-filled or custard-filled pastries, cakes, and pudding.
- Any dish made with cream sauce.
- Meats, poultry, fish, and seafood.
- Dressing for poultry and meat.
- Sandwiches and also sandwich filling.
- Any foods made from meat, milk, or eggs.

Storing Food

Refrigerating and Freezing:

- In order to keep bacteria from multiplying in your refrigerator and freezer, your refrigerator should be set for 40 degrees Fahrenheit or 5 degrees Celsius. Freezer should be set to 0 degrees Fahrenheit or lower.
- Place eggs on a shelf in the refrigerator. The refrigerator door doesn't keep the eggs cold enough.
- Place meat and fish in separately sealed containers so their juices will not get on other foods.
- Freeze or cook raw meat and fish within two days.

- Raw ground meats can be stored in the freezer for a maximum of four months.
- Freeze cooked meat for a maximum of three months.
- Do not refrigerate poultry and stuffing together. Take the stuffing out and store it separately.
- Store leftovers as soon as possible after cooking.
- Eat leftovers within 3-5 days. Throw the food out if it has been in your refrigerator for longer than that.

Preparing and Cooking

Raw meat, fish, and egg products:

- Always wash your hands thoroughly with soap and water before and after handling these items.
- Keep raw meat and their juices away from other food on the kitchen counter.
- Use separate utensils to serve these items if they have been used to cook raw meat, eggs, and fish.
- Use different dishes for raw and cooked meat, fish, and eggs.
- Thaw meat and fish in the refrigerator or microwave. Never leave them out at room temperature. Cooked thawed items immediately.
- Do not let raw eggs to sit in room temperature for more than two hours.
- Cook meat until the center is no longer pink and the juices have a clear color.
- In the microwave, rotate and stir all meats halfway through cooking.

Fruits and Vegetables

- Before eating fruits and vegetables, scrub them skin with plain water, even if you're planning on peeling them. This will remove any pesticide and dirt on them. This will also help bacteria from transferring from the skin to the inside of the fruit or vegetable during cutting.
- Remove the outer leaf of greens such as spinach and lettuce.



Food poisoning, can occur after eating food contaminated by viruses, bacteria, and parasites.

Temperature guide for cooking different foods:

- The minimum internal cooking temperature needed:
 - Ground, chopped, and flaked meats (beef, veal, lamb, and pork) to 155-157°F.
 - Eggs to 145°F.
 - Pork and pork products to 155°F.
 - Poultry and stuffed products to 165°F.
- When using a microwave to food, add 25°F to each product listed above and let it stand for 2 minutes before serving.
- Keep hot foods at or above 135°F until served.
- Do not work around food with an infected cut, burn, boil, or any other infection. Properly use band-aids and gloves.

Cleaning Up

- Wash cutting boards with hot soapy water. Disinfect them with a homemade cleaning solution of one teaspoon chlorine bleach mixed with a quart of water. Rinse cutting boards to remove bleach residue. Air dry cutting boards.
- Do not use old cutting boards. Bacteria hide in those places.
- Do not use a dish towel to wipe meat juices from your hands. The bacteria can be spread to other foods if the towel is used again. Wash the towel in hot water.
- Wipe kitchen counters with commercial kitchen cleaning product after preparing and cooking food.
- Sponges attract bacteria and stay wet longer. Use thinner dishrags that can dry faster.
- Sanitize kitchen sink, drain, and garbage disposal periodically with commercial kitchen cleaner.

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be immediately washed with soap and water and an antiseptic applied. Contact a physician if signs of infection appear.

Wasps

Paper wasps are about 3/4 inch in length and are longer than they are wide. The umbrella-shaped nests are suspended by a short stem to the underside of overhanging surfaces such as house eaves or patio covers. Colonies are usually small and contain only a few dozen paper wasps that leave the nest during the day to search for caterpillars that are fed to the young. When tending to the nest and developing brood, paper wasps are easily provoked by sudden movements near the nest and will sting forcibly and repeatedly.

Control efforts are best performed in the spring when nests are small and contain fewer wasps. Wasp sprays that deliver a long and forceful stream of fluid to the nest can be used most effectively at dusk, dawn or after dark, when all wasp workers are in the nest. Remove the nest after control efforts. It may be necessary to conduct weekly inspections of the home and property during the spring and early summer to prevent nesting attempts by new queens.

Yellow jackets are another common wasp. Their body is more stout and slightly shorter than paper wasps, and their abdomens are

yellow with bold black bars and spots. The most common yellow jacket wasps in the county prefer to build their large paper nests in the ground. They will also locate nests within the walls of structures when cracks or holes provide them access to the interior voids. Colonies are started in the early spring, usually by a single queen, and grow quickly to include several thousand workers.

Workers require high energy diets and are attracted to over ripe or rotten fruits. They also scavenge for protein for the developing young. Yellow jackets are bold and inflict a painful sting. Their constant search for sweets or meats can quickly ruin a picnic or outdoor gathering.

Trapping wasps

In areas where there is a history of excessive numbers of wasps, traps that attract scavenging wasps should be liberally placed early each spring and maintained throughout the summer. Traps placed late in the season do little to reduce populations of the wasps. Nests can occasionally be located by observing the wasps as they enter or exit a hole in the ground or a wall. Since the nest can contain thousands of workers where each is capable of delivering multiple stings, control is best achieved by calling a pest management professional.



Honeybees and Africanized Honeybees

Most people can readily recognize honeybees. In the wild they build colonies in the cavities of trees or other such protected locations. In residential neighborhoods they will nest in crawl spaces, wall voids, chimneys, or storage sheds. Since the temperamental and easily provoked Africanized honeybee cannot be readily distinguished from the European strains that have colonized North America for centuries, any honeybee nest could potentially harbor the Africanized strain.

Properties should be inspected routinely for nesting bees. If you suspect a nest is located on your property, no attempt should be made to approach it or eliminate the bees. Contact a pest management professional who has the proper equipment and training as soon as possible.

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near the pool, but avoid inflatable swimming aids such as "floaties." They are not a substitute for approved life vests and can give children a false sense of security. Children who know how to swim are at a lesser risk for drowning. You can find swimming lessons at your community pool.

Bug Safety:

Teach your children to avoid areas where insects nest or congregate, such as stagnant pools of water, uncovered foods, and gardens where flowers bloom. Avoid dressing your child in clothing with bright colors or flowery prints, and don't use scented soaps, perfumes or hair sprays on your child. If your child is stung by an insect, you can remove a visible stinger

from skin. Gently scrape it off horizontally with a credit card or your fingernail.

Insect repellents containing DEET are the most effective. The concentration of DEET in products may range from less than 10 percent to over 30 percent. The maximum DEET concentration currently recommended for infants and children is 30 percent, where the benefits of DEET reach its peak. The concentration of DEET varies significantly from product to product, so read the label of any product you purchase. DEET should not be used on children under 2 months of age.



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